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JOHN BELL OF TENNESSEE

A CHAPTER OF POLITICAL HISTORY

A TENNESSEE lawyer wittily says that Tennessee "broke into the Union." The "Territory of the United States South of the River Ohio" was established by an act of Congress passed May 26, 1790. By this act the newly created territory, which geographically was almost identical with the present state of Tennessee, was to be governed in all respects as the Northwest Territory, except that slavery was to be permitted. This last had been provided for in the act of cession, by which North Carolina had conveyed the greater part of the territory to the United States.

The new territory was entitled to become a state whenever the population should amount to 60,000. The census properly should have been ordered by Congress and taken under Federal supervision, but the legislature of the territory, in ignorance or in disregard of this fact, passed an act July 11, 1795, for the enumeration of the people. The population was found to exceed seventy-seven thousand. Thereupon a convention was called, and met at Knoxville, January 11, 1796. By the sixth of February it had completed its labors, having reproduced, with certain democratic changes, the constitution of North Carolina of 1776. Mr. Jefferson said of this Tennessee constitution, "that it was the least imperfect and the most republican" of the state constitutions.

The new applicant for statehood did not waste time, but in March, 1796, assembled its first legislature, and prematurely elected two senators. On the 8th of April the constitution was presented to Congress. After some debate the House of Representatives passed a bill admitting Tennessee into the Union, but in the Senate the most serious opposition was encountered. The active championship of Aaron Burr was one of the principal means of securing the passage of the bill. The Federalists opposed it as a measure in aid of Mr. Jefferson's ambition to become President. The bill was approved by the President on the first day of June, 1796.

It thus appears that the Federalist leaders regarded Tennessee as certain to become a Republican state. In this they were right, and their course in opposing her admission to the Union had the

effect of confirming her Republicanism. The people were indignant on account of the opposition, and for many years no public man in Tennessee dared to admit that he entertained Federalist principles. It was not until 1823 that there was a sign of revolt from the Democratic-Republican party in the state, and even then the demonstration was not serious, and for twelve years later there was no real party division in Tennessee. The Whig party had its birth in Tennessee in the year 1835, although four years elapsed before the name was openly adopted.

In 1823 John Williams,¹ who was United States senator from Tennessee, sought re-election. He had been a colonel in the regular army, and had led his regiment with conspicuous valor in the battle of the Horse-shoe. As a senator, his services had been acceptable and everything indicated his re-election. But Andrew Jackson was a candidate for the presidency and his supporters demanded pledges from Williams, who declined to give them and avowed his preference for a rival candidate. The Jackson men, failing to find any other candidate who could defeat him, brought forward their distinguished leader, and elected him, but not without vigorous opposition. Among the members of the legislature who voted for Williams against Jackson was David Crockett. In 1825 and again in 1833, Crockett was elected to Congress. During both terms he was outspoken in opposition to Jackson, and in the last one declared himself a Whig, being probably the first man of note in the state to assume the name openly. From the year 1815 till his death, Andrew Jackson was the foremost man in Tennessee. Failing of election to the presidency in 1824 he was elected in 1828, securing the support of New York, through the political skill and the energy of Martin Van Buren. Next to Jackson in distinction and popularity among the public men of Tennessee at this period was Hugh Lawson White, a man of great ability, of unsullied purity, and much force of character. He had been for years Jackson's intimate friend and his wisest and most capable adviser. About the beginning of Jackson's second term, White began to be spoken of as a probable successor. Jackson had determined that Van Buren should succeed him, and left nothing undone to secure that end. White was offered the most honorable offices in order to prevent his candidacy for the presidency, but declined them all. Finally Jackson, according to his custom, yielded to his temper and declared that if White became a candidate he would be made odious to society. In December, 1834, a majority of the Tennessee delegation in Congress joined in a letter to White asking him to declare himself a candidate. Justly incensed

¹ John Williams was a great-grandfather of Naval Constructor Richmond P. Hobson.

against Jackson, he instantly consented, and among his supporters at this time was John Bell, who was destined to be the leader of the Whig party, in Tennessee, throughout its existence.

These preliminary statements are necessary to a clear understanding of Bell's career. He was a native of Tennessee, and was born near Nashville, February 15, 1797. His father, Samuel Bell, was one of the pioneers of Tennessee. His mother, whose maiden name was Margaret Edmiston, was a native of Virginia, descended from a worthy Scotch-Irish ancestry. Her father, Samuel Edmiston, was with Shelby at the battle of King's Mountain, and the musket which he carried on that memorable day is preserved in the rooms of the Tennessee Historical Society at Nashville.

John Bell was educated at the University of Nashville, graduating in 1814. Three years later, when he had barely attained his majority, he was elected to the state senate. Realizing promptly, however, that he had made a mistake in entering politics so early in life, he declined a re-election, and removing to Nashville, devoted the next ten years to the study and the practice of law, and to careful general reading. The bar of Nashville was a strong one, but Bell rose rapidly, and the most competent judges declare that he was exceptionally qualified for the profession. The cast of his mind was philosophic and judicial, but he preferred the large affairs of state to the incessant contests and the drudgery of the law. That he looked forward, from the first, to a career in public life, is not to be doubted.

In 1827, he believed that the time had arrived when he might enter with safety upon this career. The Nashville district contained many strong men, but, with the exception of Andrew Jackson, none better known or more popular, at that time, than Felix Grundy. In Kentucky, where he had been reared, Grundy had been chief-justice of the highest court of that state. In the legislature of Kentucky he had shown himself no unworthy rival of Henry Clay as an orator and as a debater. In Tennessee, whither he moved in 1807, he had been elected to Congress with practical unanimity in 1811, and re-elected in 1813, but had resigned. While in Congress he had exerted an unsurpassed influence. He had been one of the most vigorous advocates of the War of 1812, and the Federalists were fond of attributing that war to the firm of "Madison, Grundy and the Devil."

In 1827, Mr. Grundy again sought to represent the Nashville district in Congress. Andrew Jackson was his outspoken and active supporter, and at that time the influence of Jackson in Tennessee was believed to be irresistible. It caused the most profound

astonishment therefore, when Grundy, the man next to Jackson in popular fame and admiration, in the district, was defeated by John Bell, then a comparatively unknown man ; and the new congressman continued for fourteen years to represent the Nashville district.

At first there was no open breach between him and Jackson, but Bell never forgot the contest of 1827, and Jackson's course at that time was destined to influence profoundly the later political history of the state and of the Union. It was the beginning of the estrangement of the two men who played the most important parts in public life in Tennessee, during the three decades preceding the Civil War. Despite the fact that Mr. Bell's temperament and habits of mind were in a measure unsuited to the noisy and sometimes tempestuous proceedings of the House of Representatives, he speedily rose to a position of leadership. Among the Tennesseans he was easily the most accomplished and effective debater. He was not a frequent speaker, but when he arose was heard always with respect and attention. He had many of the physical gifts and graces of the orator, together with an exceptional command of language, and was a clear, logical and persuasive reasoner.

Twice he seemed on the brink of a broader career ; but was both times disappointed. In 1834 he was elected Speaker of the House of Representatives, but in 1835 was defeated for that office by James K. Polk of his own state. In 1841 he entered President Harrison's cabinet as Secretary of War, but resigned after the death of the President and the political defection of his successor. He might at this time, or at least in 1843, have been elected to the Senate, but preferred for the time to remain in private life.

Meanwhile events of great importance to him and to the country led, or rather drove him, to a radical change of position. In every Congressional election, after 1827, the friends of Jackson had manifested a bitter opposition to Bell, but all their efforts to defeat him had been futile. The estrangement between Jackson and Bell, begun in 1827, was more and more confirmed every year by this persistent antagonizing of Bell by the President's friends.

As early as 1831, Jackson's determination to make Van Buren his successor was becoming widely known, though Tennessee and other states preferred White, and Crockett, again in Congress, was bold in opposing Jackson. The seeds sown in the fight against Williams in 1823 were bearing fruit ; and in 1835 the time was ripe for political revolution in Tennessee. White's candidacy for the presidency was a declaration of independence and also a declaration of war. Tennessee was strongly for White and profoundly distrustful of Van Buren. Bell became the leader of the White forces

in that state, not so much because he loved White, although he held him in great esteem, as because he knew that his own political life and the political future of the state were involved in the struggle.

Up to this time Bell had never placed himself distinctly in opposition to Jackson, or to his party. It is true that he had disapproved the removal of the bank deposits, but he had supported Jackson in the nullification troubles, and had been in accord with the administration upon the subject of the tariff. Even in 1835 he was not ready to leave the Democratic-Republican party, or to admit that the differences between the President and himself were more than personal. Upon the contrary he declared that the friends of White would adhere to Jackson, but from a desire to be consistent, and out of respect for their own characters and in support of their own principles. But events were irresistible ; no sooner had White become a candidate, than a furious factional war began. The *Globe*, the Jackson organ at Washington, declared that White was being used by Bell to break down the administration. The President declared that Bell must not be returned to Congress ; but no one could be found to run against him, and he was re-elected. The press of the state favored White, and therefore one Jeremiah George Harris, a native of New England, a trained writer, with a gift of satire and vituperation, devoted to Jackson and Van Buren and versed in political methods, was brought to Tennessee and placed in charge of a newspaper to ridicule and abuse Bell and White. In 1835, White was returned to the Senate. In the state election of that year, the White candidate for governor was elected, and everything indicated that the state would go for White in the Federal election.

Jackson, as usual, fought with all his strength, willingly enduring the hardships of the long journey from Washington to Tennessee in order to engage in personal advocacy of his candidate, maintaining, however, that the issue was solely between White and himself. But his efforts were of no avail. White carried the state and even secured a majority in the Hermitage precinct. Jackson and his supporters in this campaign denounced Bell and White and their friends as Whigs, as "new Whigs," and by this last opprobrious name they were long known. The reluctance with which men admit a change of political position was never more strikingly shown than in Tennessee at this period. The proscriptions of the Jacksonians had alienated many prominent men and caused much discontent among the people ; in Tennessee, as elsewhere, there were differences of opinion upon public questions, but the sentiment existing before Tennessee became a state and confirmed by the opposi-

tion to her admission, had up to this time been too strong to be resisted, and the leaders of the dominant party had been men of extraordinary ability and force.

It was not until 1839 that the opponents of Jackson reached the point where they were willing to call themselves Whigs. White refused to the last to adopt the name, but called himself an independent. Newton Cannon, a candidate for governor in 1839, was the first avowed Whig candidate for that office in Tennessee. But the strength of the Whigs, or of the opponents of Jackson, in the state is shown by the fact that in 1840 Harrison carried Tennessee by a majority of 12,000 votes in a total of a little over 100,000. In 1841 and again in 1843, James C. Jones, the Whig candidate for governor, defeated so conspicuous and important a Democrat as James K. Polk.

In 1844, Mr. Polk, although elected President, was unable to carry his own state, and in 1848 and in 1852, the Whig candidates received the electoral vote of Tennessee. In every presidential election from 1796 to 1832, inclusive, Tennessee gave her vote to the Democratic-Republican candidate. In 1824 John Quincy Adams received only 216 votes in the state, and in 1828 only 2,240. In 1832 Mr. Clay's vote was 1,436 and Jackson's 28,740. These figures compared with the vote in 1836 show, first, the strength of the Democratic party, and the utter want of opposition to it, and, second, that there was a large stay-at-home vote in the state which must have been in some measure disaffected. For in 1836 Van Buren received 26,120 votes, only 2,000 less than had been cast for Jackson four years before, while the aggregate opposition vote was almost 36,000. Making the largest allowance for the increase of population in the interval between the two elections, it is still certain that almost half the voters had been neglecting to vote, and that many of them were not Democrats, or at least not Jacksonians in sentiment. Crockett, Williams, White and Bell led the way to overthrow of the Democrats. Crockett was unable to return to Congress after 1835, Williams died in 1837, and White in 1840, and Bell became, as he was entitled to be, the leader of the Whig party in Tennessee, and held that position without dispute until the dissolution of the party. Thus the first manifestation of serious opposition to Jackson in Tennessee was in 1835; the first contest in which the party name Whig was openly adopted was in 1839, and the last distinctively Whig victory in 1852. The election of 1860 will be considered later.

Tennessee, the second in age among the southwestern states, was from 1825 to 1860 the first in political importance and

influence, by reason of her population and wealth, by reason of the ability of her public men, and not a little because Andrew Jackson was a citizen of the state. It was in the early part of this period that the West asserted itself, and that the new Democratic influences which wrested the government permanently from the Federalists made themselves felt. Speaking of this time, Woodrow Wilson says: "The inauguration of Jackson brought a new class of men into leadership, and marks the beginning, for good or for ill, of a distinctively American order of politics, begotten of the crude forces of a new nationality. A change of political weather, long preparing, had set in. The new generation which asserted itself in Jackson was not in the least regardful of conservative traditions." In Kentucky the influence of Mr. Clay, always opposed to Jackson, and always conservative, gave a different direction to opinion and conduct.

From 1815 to 1835 the political vocabulary of Tennessee was comprised in the one word Jackson. Admiration and fear alike contributed to Jackson's influence, and never was a public man more ardently or ably supported. Among his lieutenants were John Overton, John Catron, John H. Eaton, Aaron V. Brown, Cave Johnson, Felix Grundy, Hugh L. White and James K. Polk, all men of large ability and in the front rank of Southern leaders. The party thus led was long invincible, and its defeat came at last from over-confidence, and the illiberal and proscriptive policy of its imperative chief. But its overthrow was not easily accomplished. The first serious resistance was made within three years of the time when it had carried the state with practical unanimity. Jackson, the hardest of fighters, was still its leader, and was animated, not only by his native determination and by political prejudices and pride, but also by a bitter personal dislike of the leaders of the opposition. After the defeats of 1835 and 1836, the contest lost nothing of its bitterness. In 1839 the Democrats elected Polk governor and regained control of the legislature. Hugh L. White and Ephraim H. Foster were the senators at the time, and the Jackson leaders determined, if possible, to force them to resign. The opportunity came speedily. Both senators were known to be opposed to the sub-treasury, and both were known to believe that the legislature had the right to instruct senators in Federal affairs. Resolutions were therefore adopted at Nashville, November 8, 1839, instructing White and Foster to vote among other things for the sub-treasury bill. The scheme succeeded. In 1841 the Whigs had a majority, on joint ballot, in the legislature, but the senate being Democratic by one majority, the Democrats in that body, led by

Andrew Johnson, prevented a quorum, with the result that from 1841 to 1843 Tennessee had no senators in Congress. In 1843 the Whigs elected both senators ; in 1845 the Democrats succeeded in displacing one of these. In 1847 Mr. Bell was elected and at the close of the term was re-elected, thus serving continuously for twelve years.

No other man in Tennessee, hardly any man in the South, was so well qualified by nature and by training for the duties of senator. Intellectually he was inferior probably to Webster and Calhoun, but to no other men who were in public life in 1847. His mind was large and thoroughly balanced, his temperament was equable and philosophic ; he had been a diligent student of the philosophy and history of government, of the law, and of general literature ; he was a speaker of rare powers, a graceful and effective rhetorician, and a clear and discriminating thinker. Above all he was an honest man of blameless life, and a sincere patriot.

His time of service in the Senate was one of strife and of incessant commotion and change in the political world. Patriotic expedients had long postponed issue in Congress upon the slavery question, but now conditions imperatively demanded its consideration. Mr. Clay, still devoted to compromise, in 1850 secured the submission of the pending questions of sectional difference to a committee of thirteen selected from both parties, and Bell served with him on this committee.

A bill for the organization of Nebraska was introduced in the session of 1852-1853, but was not disposed of until the following year ; to the measure, Bell was strongly opposed, mainly because of the injustice to the Indians that would result from its adoption. In 1854 came the proposition to repeal the Missouri Compromise. The South, upon firm constitutional grounds, but with deplorably mistaken policy, favored the repeal, and Mr. Bell's vote against it provoked anger and widespread criticism in Tennessee. The repeal of the Compromise proved to be in the highest degree prejudicial to the South. When the Lecompton Constitution for Kansas came before Congress, Bell did not hesitate, in advance of its consideration, to declare himself opposed to it. Thereupon the legislature of Tennessee instructed him to vote for it. He declined, however, to be instructed, and voted against the so-called constitution, thereby again incurring the severest censure. But he was right and had the courage to stand to his convictions. In 1859 he retired from the Senate. For seven years he had been practically a man without a party. In 1851, the Whigs had been still strong enough to carry Tennessee for Scott, but it was a barren victory. The Whigs carried only four

states, and the party received its death-blow. Bell was returned to the Senate, and thenceforth he and Crittenden of Kentucky represented the Southern Whigs in that body. They were not only the last of the Whig leaders, but the last of the great men of their generation in the Senate.

Bell returned to Tennessee at a time of great uncertainty and anxiety. The political sky was angry and full of threatenings, and forebodings of evil oppressed every patriot heart. Bell loved the Union with a surpassing love, and his every sentiment and every conviction opposed the doctrine and the policy of secession. It is too soon, now, to say that the conduct of many Northern leaders, especially of the more strenuous advocates of abolition, was extreme, and their demands opposed to the Constitution. But Bell and other Union men of the South believed this to be true. These genuine patriots and Unionists were not more opposed to Southern "fire-eaters," of the Yancey type, than to such Northern "fire-eaters" as Garrison and Phillips. They regarded both factions of extremists as alike responsible for the danger that threatened the Union, and it is at least possible that the impartial history which is yet to be written will not charge the Southern leaders with all the unreasonableness and want of patriotism that provoked the Civil War. Bell was prepared to make any personal or political sacrifice to preserve the Union. Another presidential election was at hand. The long-triumphant Democracy was now discordant. The Charleston Convention marked a fatal disruption of the party, and the existence of two irreconcilable factions forbade all hope of success. The Republican party, though young and not yet firmly established, was hopeful and aggressive. There were many worthy men, especially in the South, who would not follow either faction of the Democracy, and who, at the same time, strongly opposed the Republican policy. A convention of these, representing twenty-two states, met in Baltimore, May 9, 1860, and nominated Bell for President and Edward Everett for Vice-President, as the candidates of the "Constitutional Union Party." Bell's principal competitor for the nomination was Sam Houston, of Texas. With much frankness and justice the convention declared that party platforms were insincere, and meant to deceive, and therefore it promulgated none, but contented itself with the adoption of a simple resolution, declaring in favor of the Union, the Constitution and the enforcement of the laws. In the election, Bell and Everett carried the states of Tennessee, Kentucky and Virginia, and received three of the votes of New Jersey.

The six months succeeding the election were full of distress for

Bell and his friends in Tennessee. Isham G. Harris, the governor, a man of great ability and of indomitable will, was now an avowed secessionist. Bell was no less positive in opposition, and at first it seemed that Tennessee would refuse to secede. The vote for Bell and Everett had been 69,274, for Douglas 11,350, for Breckenridge 64,709. Thus the Whigs and the Union Democrats outnumbered the Breckenridge Democrats by fifteen thousand.

On January 7, 1861, the legislature met in special session, and shortly afterward passed a resolution submitting to the people the question of ordering a convention to determine whether or not the state would withdraw from the Union, and also providing for the election of delegates to the convention. The election was held February 8, 1861, and the vote was for the convention, 57,798, against it, 69,675. A better test of public sentiment, however, was the vote for delegates, cast at the same time. The aggregate vote for Union delegates was 88,803, and for disunion delegates 24,749.

This election was accepted as conclusive evidence that Tennessee would not secede, and but for the events of the ensuing spring, she probably would not have seceded. There was no one in the state who was a disunionist for the sake of disunion, not even Governor Harris, but while East Tennessee had but few slaves, Middle and West Tennessee were large slave-holding sections, having interests and sentiments in common with the states that had already seceded.

The attack on Fort Sumter provoked Mr. Lincoln's proclamation of April 15, 1861, calling for volunteers to suppress insurrection, and Governor Harris, when called upon for the state's quota, sent an indignant refusal.

This was the critical time for Bell and his followers, and we shall fail to do justice to the Whig leader without knowledge of his pure character and lofty patriotism; without a genuine sympathy for him personally and a clear perception of conditions in the South at that time. He believed, after the publication of the President's proclamation, that the destruction of the Union was inevitable. He believed, also, that the policy of the administration was unconstitutional and revolutionary. Alexander H. Stephens declares that Mr. Lincoln's proclamations alone caused the Southern Whigs to change position. He says that the Whig leaders of the South regarded these proclamations as the English people regarded the edicts of Charles I. for ship-money.

Three days after the appearance of the proclamation calling for volunteers a number of the most prominent Whigs in Tennessee, led by Mr. Bell, issued an address in which they said, among other things: "Tennessee is called upon by the President to furnish two

regiments, and the state has, through her executive, refused to comply with the call. This refusal of our state we fully approve." A later paragraph contains the following: "Should a purpose be developed by the government of over-running and subjugating our brethren of the seceded states, we say unequivocally that it will be the duty of the state to resist at all hazards, and at any cost, and by force of arms, any such purpose or attempt." The address further calls upon the state to arm and to maintain the position of armed neutrality which many Southern Whigs vainly hoped would enable the conservatives to mediate between the North and the South.

This address having been issued, events speedily dictated the result. The South was threatened with invasion. On the 25th of April the legislature again met in special session. The governor in his message boldly advocated secession and an application for admission into the Southern Confederacy. The ordinance of secession was passed May 6, 1861, affirming not the constitutional right, but the revolutionary right of withdrawal from the Union in the following language: "We, the people of the State of Tennessee, waiving any expression of opinion as to the abstract doctrine of secession, but asserting the right as a free and independent people to alter, reform, or abolish our form of government in such manner as we think proper, do ordain," etc.

On May 7, the state entered into a military league with the Confederacy, and the legislature appropriated \$5,000,000 to equip a provisional army of 55,000 men. When the vote was taken, June 8, it stood for secession 104,913, against secession 47,238, for representation in the Confederate Congress 101,701, against representation 47,364. On the 24th of June the governor issued his proclamation formally dissolving the connection of Tennessee with the United States, and on the 2d of July, President Jefferson Davis declared Tennessee a member of the Southern Confederacy. Mr. Bell went with the state.

In the brief political campaign preceding the June election, his influence was actively exerted in favor of the measure which up to that time he had strenuously opposed. He did not advocate nor approve secession as a political doctrine, but in the spirit of the state ordinance, asserted that conditions required the exercise of the right of revolution. Northern writers have condemned him severely for his course at this time. Mr. Blaine says: "If Mr. Bell had taken firm ground for the Union, the secession movement would have been to a very great extent paralyzed in the South." Comparing Bell with Everett he says: "If Mr. Bell had stood beside

him with equal courage and equal determination, Tennessee would never have seceded and the Rebellion would have been confined to the seven original states. A large share of the responsibility for the dangerous development of the Rebellion must, therefore, be attributed to John Bell and his half-million Southern supporters of the old Whig party. At the critical moment, they signally failed."

These censures are in a large measure unjust, and they demonstrate the want of an accurate knowledge of Mr. Bell's character and opinions, and of political conditions in the South before the war. Bell was a man of extraordinary purity of character and was sincere in every act and utterance of his public life. He rejected the doctrine that the Constitution authorized secession for any cause. He did not believe that any state could of its own motion lawfully separate from the Union, but upon the other hand he held the Southern rather than the Northern view of the limitations of the Federal government over the states, and was sincere in the belief that the conduct of the government in April, 1861, was so gross a violation of the Constitution, as to justify Tennessee in declaring her independence. It is not intended here to offer any argument in support of these opinions, but only to declare, that whether they were right or wrong, Mr. Bell held them in good faith. Therefore, his conduct at this time was not a "signal failure," but an act of conscience, not a manifestation of weakness of character, but of devotion to conviction and to duty, made fearlessly, but with infinite reluctance and distress.

That anything that he could have done would have prevented the secession of Tennessee is not true. The doctrine of states' rights and state loyalty had pervaded the entire South, and many thousands of genuine patriots and sincere lovers of the Union with aching hearts followed their states out of the Union, under the compulsion of an honest sense of duty. But an overwhelming majority of the people of the slaveholding states demanded secession, and carried their point. The sentiment was irresistible. It has been asserted that Governor Harris forced Tennessee out of the Union, while Bell failed in courage and duty at the critical moment. Against the latter accusation it has already been shown that Bell really displayed courage of the highest order. But it is further true that superficial observers have attributed to Bell and to Harris a degree of influence vastly in excess of what either possessed. The great currents of popular sentiment that were sweeping over the South at that time irresistibly carried all men, great and small, one way or the other. Harris did not cause the secession of Tennessee, and

could not have prevented it. If Bell had been a man ten times greater and ten times more influential, he could not have held Tennessee in the Union, after Mr. Lincoln's call for volunteers. That was a task beyond human power. Leaders no longer led. The popular will was supreme. If Bell had not yielded, as he did, to the honest belief that his duty lay with the people of Tennessee, he would have been brushed aside or crushed by this tremendous sentiment. And so if Harris, with all the vigor of his intense and imperious nature, had attempted to stem the tide, he also would have been lost. Both were men of extraordinary force and influence, but the events of the time obscured all persons and all personal influence.

In the war Mr. Bell had no part, and never after 1860 did he attract or seek public attention. He had not been sufficiently in sympathy with secession to win the favor of the South, and at the North much odium was unjustly attached to his name. This country has produced no more sincerely or unselfishly patriotic man, none whose life was more thoroughly squared with conviction. To no American did the war bring deeper grief, and never did opprobrium more unjustly fall upon an honorable and a good man. He died September 18, 1869.

That he was not fitted for times of revolution must be admitted. He was not a man of action, but of thought; a scholar, a philosopher, a scrupulous and cautious, but great statesman. He had almost none of the qualities that made his great antagonist Andrew Jackson a successful popular leader. The scholarly and philosophic cast of his mind, the habit of considering all sides of every question, gave to his conduct sometimes the appearance of indecision. He did not decide quickly, but slowly and carefully, but a conclusion once reached was fearlessly maintained. In later life he perhaps lacked aggressiveness, though this was not true of him in his early days, and especially in his brilliant canvass against Grundy in 1827. He was a leader in the two political struggles which were the most momentous in the history of Tennessee. In the fierce battle against Jackson, he was successful and won the leadership of a great party. In the contest of 1861 he was compelled by a sense of duty to yield, but he retired in honor, and dispassionate history will rank him among the ablest, the purest and the best men our country has produced.

JOSHUA W. CALDWELL.